



**HOLY NATIVITY  
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

*Helping All Know God's Love*

3900 WINNETKA AVENUE NORTH  
NEW HOPE, MINNESOTA 55427

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING REPORT

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 2022 – 11:30AM

A CONGREGATION OF THE NORTHWEST HENNEPIN  
CONFERENCE OF THE MINNEAPOLIS AREA SYNOD OF  
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN  
AMERICA

Annual Report to the Congregation 2022  
Pastor Jason R. Wahlstrom

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin a new year of ministry together here at Holy Nativity, I thank God for you and for the mission of this congregation. In the midst of a pandemic that has had unexpected impacts on our ministry over the last two years, we have continued to be the church together. Our commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and serving our neighbors has never been stronger. As we have faced the challenges of the last two years, I can't help but think that our 2022 stewardship theme is a good description of who we are as a congregation. We are **caring, connected, and committed**, and those traits have only been strengthened by the challenges of the ongoing pandemic.

We have continued to care for each other and our neighbors. In a time when we have needed it most, we have been a **caring** community that provided support and nurture to each other. We stepped up and strongly supported a project to provide clean water to those in need in Honduras. We have cared for and supported our community members through illness and grief. We have continued to show care to our wider community through our ongoing support of organizations like PRISM and Every Meal. Caring for all people as Jesus taught us is central to who we are as a congregation.

During a time when people have been more isolated than ever before, we have remained **connected**. We have quickly learned new technologies that have allowed us to worship, learn, pray, and have fun together over the internet. We have been creative in finding ways to remain connected, even if it meant gathering outside when the weather was less than favorable. As new variants of the virus have caused even further disruption, we have been flexible with scheduling and understanding when not everything has been able to go as planned.

Finally, we are **committed** to continuing to be a strong community of faith, centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ and serving our neighbors. Your ongoing commitment is demonstrated in our ability to keep funding those ministries that are important to us as a congregation. We even finished 2021 with a small financial surplus, which is no small feat in the middle of a pandemic!

Thank you for your continued support of the mission of Holy Nativity Lutheran Church!

In God's amazing grace,  
Pastor Jason

## Partners in Ministry,

We made it through one of the oddest years of our lives: 2021. We pivoted and adapted and tried new things and returned to past things. It has been exhausting work to keep up with the changes the world has thrown at us this year. Through it all, we continue to be committed to worship, learning, and community—building firm relationships with God, one another, and our broader community. We have learned resilience and grace the hard way, but I am thankful for the lessons, and for learning them together with you.

Here are some highlights from this past year:

- A women's retreat was held in March, exploring and learning about the "Tiny Things" we can cultivate in our life to find peace, community, and rest.
- After George Floyd's death, this congregation donated tons of supplies that were delivered to organizations in the city for distribution to those whose lives were disrupted by the ensuing rioting.
- In May we confirmed our 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, after a year of on-line and hybrid classes. It has been so fun to be solely back in person starting in Fall 2021, connecting with students around the life and ministry of Jesus.
- In July, 18 students and 6 adults went on a trip to the Boundary Waters. It was an incredible week in God's beautiful creation. Students learned to disconnect from the technology that so often binds us, and they learned how strong and capable they are!
- Throughout the summer, I held outdoor lunches for students and monthly Coffee and Conversation with adults.
- At the end of the summer, we met for the annual Women's Book Study—and even though the reviews of the book were mixed, a good time was had by all!
- This fall we kicked off Third Wednesday Worship, a thirty-minute, simple service with music and communion. It's a meaningful way to experience Scripture and see its connections to life in new ways.
- Also new this fall is re:Install. This adult confirmation class has 11 participants. We are doing a crash course in all the things from Scripture to theology! The conversation and participation are really exciting.
- Homecoming weekend was a great way to welcome back folks to in-person worship and education, along with an outdoor meal and our first-ever game of human foosball! We continue to worship both in-person and on-line, and it is so great that no matter where people are at, they can connect in worship together.
- In December, I posted daily advent devotionals on-line for people to hear the story of God from the very beginning through Jesus's birth and sent care packages to our college-aged students, to help them know that this faith community cares for them, remembers them, and holds them in prayer.

This list doesn't even come close to detailing all we've been up to this year! We have returned to a more normal Sunday morning schedule, with weekly education for all in addition to worship, and with this return to normalcy, there have been weddings and funerals and so much more.

Things are not the same as they once were, and at this point I think it's fair to say they might never be. What is the same—what will be the same—is God's unending love for us. A love that moves us towards one another, out to the community, and into the future. This congregation will continue to help all know God's love. We are poised to reflect on and perhaps change how we do that—but that continues to be the mission that grounds us and motivates us. Thank you for being part of it.

Pr. Ashley

## COLUMBARIUM AND MEMORIAL GARDEN

Operating Committee ( as per by- laws )  
Pastor Jason Wahlstrom  
Milton Ferris ( Church Council Treasurer )  
Mark Chamberlain ( Church Council Property )  
LuVerne Erickson ( Congregational Member )  
Karen Gaasland ( Congregational Member )

The Columbarium and Memorial Garden dedicated in June 2009, is one of the ministries Holy Nativity Lutheran Church offers its members and their families. Holy Nativity members, past members and members of their immediate family ( i.e parents, grandparents and children ) are eligible for inurnment. Extended family and friends may be eligible, but are subject to available space and the management of the committee.

There have been 68 niches purchased in the first and second columns. There are 20 plaques installed in the Memorial Wall as well.

After 12 years the prices remain the same in the first column until they are all sold. Niches in the second column have increased slightly to:

single- \$1250.00 to \$1350.00, double- \$2400.00 to \$2600.00, and memorial plaque- \$250.00 to \$300.00.

In September, 2020 we took \$25,000.00 from our account and invested it for 48 months at 2.25% with a Mission Investment Fund. Our current balance is \$25,702.43. In addition, \$5,810.83 remains in our HN account at Wells Fargo.

The Memorial Garden is maintained by the Columbarium Gardeners. Thank you for all your work: Karen Anderson, Deb Campion, Nancy Dickinson, Karen Gaasland, Pat and Rowley Manning, and Ann Moser. In addition, a big thank you to Rod Moser for trimming bushes and LuVerne Erickson for maintaining the fountain and lighted wreath placed in the Columbarium for the Christmas Season and donated by Gary and Jackie Peterson.

We are addressing a discoloration issue of the columns and hope to have it solved in the spring.

The cost of our columbarium niches is far lower than others in the area. A single niche is more than \$3500.00 less and a double niche more than \$ 5200.00 less. The average cost of a burial plot and a standard funeral is \$8000 more than cremation and a niche in our columbarium. It's never too early to plan ahead and take the burden off your family. For information and inquiries please contact the Holy Nativity office or any committee members for Inurnment Documents and Columbarium and Memorial Garden guidelines.

Report submitted by Karen Gaasland  
January, 2022

## 2021 Ministry Team Report

**Ministry Team:** Education

**Council Liaison:** April Umaña

**Ministry Team Members:** Kristen Chamberlain, Emily Spanjers

**Purpose of Team:** The purpose of the education team is to help plan and support educational opportunities to help youth of all ages know god's love.

**2021 Highlights/Accomplishments:** The year started out online only but gradually moved to full in person education opportunities by the end of the year. One brand new education opportunity which Pastor Ashley started this year was **re:Install** – An Adult Confirmation Class.

### Sunday Programs:

- **Sunday school Program:** (Kristin Chamberlain) This resumed online in the form of a 5 – 10 minute video with online resources in January – May of 2021.
  - May 16 was a May Faire end of the year celebration held outdoors in the parking lot with crafts, games and ice cream
  - Sunday school resumed in person on September 19. It meets every Sunday from 10:45 – 11:30am There are about 25 children ages 3 – 6<sup>th</sup> grade who attend.
  - Third grade Sunday school students were presented with Bibles during the church service on Sunday, October 17.
  - The Sunday school held a Christmas program during the 9:30am church Service on December 12.
- **Youth and Senior High Forums:** (Wendy Grimes) These started out as online only 2 times per month January 17 - May 16. On September 19 they resumed in person at the 10:45am education for all time.
  - Youth Takeover Sunday was February 14 and 15 kids participated in conducting service.
- **Adult Education Sunday Forums:** (Pastor Jason) These started online the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays through May of 2021. In September they resumed in person at 10:45 – 11:30am every Sunday in the Sanctuary following service.

### Other Programs:

- **Tuesday Bible Study Group:** (Pastor Jason) This group did not meet in January or February of 2021 but started back up on March 4 in person at church. They continued to meet through July, took August off and resumed in September. They continue to meet on Tuesdays at 10:00am in person.
- **Confirmation Program:** (Pastor Ashley) Confirmation in the spring of 2021 was held as a hybrid option of either in person or on-line on Wednesday nights. There was an end of the year in person celebration on Saturday June 5 followed by an outdoor Confirmation ceremony on Sunday June 6. There were 10 students confirmed. Fall confirmation kicked off on September 15 in person focused on Jesus and the New Testament.
  - In conjunction with confirmation, Pastor Ashley headed an initiative called **Equipping Parents**, interactive presentations for youth and their parents to participate in jointly. They were held online January 6, 17 and in person on November 1.
- **Adult Confirmation:** This is a new confirmation class for anyone older than 18 that will meet a total of 7 weeks on Wednesdays October 2021 – April 2022. This meets at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall.
- **Wildfire Youth Events:** There was one fall wildfire event held in the parking lot of Holy Nativity.
- **Adult Book Discussions:** There were 3 book studies held during the course of the year.
  - "How to Be an Antiracist," by Ibram X. Kendi, led by Pastor Jason and was held online January 20, 27, and February 3.
  - "You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience," an anthology edited by Tarana Burke and Brené Brown, Pastor Jason lead the discussions on October 27, November 3 and 10.
  - "A Children's Bible," by Lydia Millet, led by Pastor Ashley on August 18.
- **Youth Mission Trip to the Boundary Waters:** There were 18 students and 6 adults who traversed the Boundary Water Canoe Area in July. They spent 7 days in the wilderness, paddled dozens of miles, and portaged canoes and packs
- **The Tough Stuff Retreat** for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders was led by Pastor Ashley on November 6.
- **Women's Retreat:** This was the 6th annual women's retreat. It was attended by 19 women who came together to learn and grow, share in fellowship and worship, and think about tiny things they can incorporate into their lives to discover more peace and wholeness.

Respectfully Submitted – April Umaña

## 2021 Ministry Team Report

**Ministry Team** – Endowment Committee

**Council Liaison** – Tina Haugstad (through 10/2021)

**Ministry Team Members** –

Scott Syverson      Bill Norberg

Myla Meier          Kathy Davis

**Purpose/Statement of Mission**

The purpose of the Endowment Committee shall be to further the mission of HNLC through the investment and expenditure of assets given or dedicated to the endowment fund managed by the INFAITH Community Foundation. The fund will receive special gifts to enable HNLC members to see an increase in the ministry and stewardship opportunities that are dedicated to the service of Christ our Savior. This is in addition and apart from the general operating funds.

**2021 Offerings/Highlights/Accomplishments** –

With the inundation of the Covid-19 virus in 2021, the Endowment committee still met however were not able to do as much in the way of awarding grants as most church business was not happening within HN. We did manage to still award the college scholarships and provide one grant for the 2021 year.

- Two College Scholarships were awarded in 2021 for a total of \$1,750. Ryan Holt was awarded \$1,000 and Emma Ernst was awarded \$750.
- One Endowment Grant was awarded to assist in the new furniture in the lounge. An \$1,800 grant was giving to the office for their work on this project. A \$900 grant was awarded to assist with the first annual Octoberfest for gifts and prizes.
- Our balance with the INFAITH Community Foundation at the end of 2021 was \$227,599. Our Holy Nativity Endowment account balance is \$651 with all grants awarded from 2021.
- We continue to promote the virtues of gifting to the Endowment Fund through the various outlets in Holy Nativity.
- This year our committee will continue to provide a scholarship to a graduating high school senior(s), communications on contributing to the endowment fund and review future grants coming in for next year.

Thank you to the committee for their continued effort.

**Respectfully Submitted by** – Tina Haugstad

## *2021 Finance Ministry Team Report*

**Ministry Team** – Finance Ministry Team/Treasurer’s Report

**Council Liaison** – Milton Ferris

**Ministry Team Members** –

Milton Ferris, Jerry Gaasland, Kara Holt, Andrew Kubly, and Rodney Moser

**Purpose/Statement of Mission** –

To assure all financial affairs of congregation are met timely, accurately, and prudently.

**2021 Highlights/Accomplishments** –

To meet our mission goals this year we:

- Reviewed monthly financial reports.
- Continued to meet virtually via Zoom during the pandemic.
- Submitted summary finance reports for the monthly Tidings newsletter.
- Included a year-to-date financial status report with quarterly pledge statements.
- Reviewed both property casualty/liability and workers’ compensation insurance and switched the insurance carrier for the property casualty insurance, saving about \$3,600.
- Worked with Lisa Baker on obtaining, reviewing, and negotiating new copier lease.
- Created quarterly counter schedules to ensure the offerings and other income were counted and deposited. Thanks to all the counters as they are an important part of keeping our finances accurate and timely. Our 2021 counters were Sharon Beaver, Lori Cowman, Ted Davis, Milton Ferris, Jerry Gaasland, Scott Hennessy, Eric Knutson, Andrew Kubly, Lynn Kvalness, Rodney Moser, Nancy Nagle, Elizabeth Rokala, Sandee Stenzel, Nancy Van Heel, and Don Van Heel.
- Recruited Kristin Daniels and James Monner to serve on the audit committee and review the 2020 financial information & documents. The review is not considered a professional audit, however, is very useful and helpful. Thanks, Kristin and Jim!
- Compiled and reviewed the 2022 Budget.
- As of January 7, the preliminary 2021 operating surplus/(deficit) is \$4,600. When compared to the 2020 operating surplus(deficit) of roughly (\$10,800), the financial picture for operations this year improved.
- Thanks to all Holy Nativity members for both your financial generosity and gift of time.
- Special thanks to the Finance Ministry Team members, for their work and assistance during 2021.

**Respectfully Submitted by** – Milton Ferris, Treasurer

## **2021 Ministry Team Report**

**Ministry Team** – Hospitality Committee

**Council Liaison** – Emily Spanjers

**Ministry Team Members** –

Deb Gartner

Tina Haugstad

Alice Loddigs

Pr Jason Wahlstrom

Pr Ashley Updegraff

**Purpose/Statement of Mission** –

To encourage and lead the membership of the congregation in continuous and concerted efforts to reach out to others with the Gospel and invite them to become part of Christ's church. It shall have primary responsibility for identifying and encouraging opportunities which might enhance the spiritual growth of the membership. This ministry shall also work to welcome guests to the congregation and will seek meaningful ways to involve new members in the life of the church. This Ministry shall coordinate publicity, marketing and the publication of printed and visual congregational materials.

**2021 Offerings/Highlights/Accomplishments** –

The Hospitality Team spent the year implementing its new logo and working on refresh/new collateral for the church marketing information. This included –

- Finalizing new specification worksheets that will give concurrent information on how to use the new font, logo and layouts in any print material.
- Printing of new collateral for the church.
- New church merchandise
- Coordinated the first church-wide Oktoberfest
- New apparel for staff with name tags.

The Hospitality Team also coordinated the first church-wide Oktoberfest at Under Pressure Brewing.

**2022 Plans**

In 2022, Hospitality plans to update signage for the interior of the church, plan a mid-year church-wide event, and refine the Oktoberfest event. Hospitality will continue to support all other ministry teams to bring community growth along with programs for our entire Holy Nativity congregation.

**Respectfully Submitted by** – Emily Spanjers



## **Annual Report – 2021 – Outreach Ministry Team**

The Outreach Ministry Team is an active five member team including Nancy Hanson, Cindy Ernst, Denise Prosek, Pat Harwell and Connie Toavs. The Committee meets the first Wednesday evening of each month and is always looking to welcome additional members and helpers.

The Outreach Ministry budget provided quarterly donations to PRISM, Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, Lutheran Social Services, and Tree House. Outreach has supported Tree House for several years by providing a monthly meal for youth but this year also added a quarterly donation. Cindy Ernst is the Committee's contact with Tree House staff. A total of \$6,350 from the Outreach budget was donated to these organizations in 2021.

A major focus in the spring and summer was a fund raising effort to provide water filters for families in rural Honduras ravaged by two tornadoes in a very short period of time. Congregation members donated in a big way, far beyond committee expectations. We were able to provide 200 water filters as well as additional funds toward helping women prepare for chicken farming. The chicken farming is an effort to help women provide for their families and help prevent the trafficking of children. Approximately 50 households contributed to this effort. Approximately \$10,000 was raised including a matching offer from a congregation member. The nonprofit, Not for Sale, hand delivered the water filters and other donations. In August, the Committee sponsored a thank you celebration for those who donated.

The Committee continued to encourage support for PRISM, including the school supply drive and the sharing tree at Christmastime, as well as ongoing food donations. Pat Harwell is the Holy Nativity representative to PRISM.

In September, we restarted the Holy Nativity partnership with Meadow Lake Elementary and assisted with the Meadow Lake Book Fair. One time and weekly volunteer opportunities were made available and continue.

The Committee reviewed and revised the list of organizations for Holy Nativity monthly mission offerings. Information about the featured monthly organization is being included in the Tidings, Holy Post and on Facebook. Monthly mission opportunities in 2022 will include Lutheran Disaster Response, Greater Mpls. Crisis Nursery, PRISM, Not for Sale (Honduras), Pine Ridge, Home Free, Habitat for Humanity, Global Health, Every Meal (formerly Kid Pack), Lutheran World Hunger, Greater Mpls. Council of Churches.

The Committee seeks to connect congregation members with our community, the broader community and the world by providing many opportunities for one time volunteer efforts that help us meet our neighbors where they are and walk alongside them. Stay tuned for many new and interesting chances to reach out in 2022.

# 2021 MINISTRY TEAM REPORT

**Ministry Team:** Parish Life & Fellowship

**Ministry Team Members:** Deb Champion, Ted Davis, Brian Eklund, Mary Lazerine, Marisa Lerum and Linda Lien

**Purpose/State of Mission:** Create and enhance programs that bring people together outside of Sunday services.

It was another tough year for planning events, but we were able to get a few more things on the calendar compared to 2020. The committee started out the year with monthly meetings via Zoom, but were finally able to re-establish in-person meetings in June. We chose to move our monthly meeting date to the 3<sup>rd</sup> WEDNESDAY of each month to align with the monthly dinner and worship nights. Please consider joining us at 5pm on those evenings. New members and ideas are always welcome!

Aside from contributing funds to the December 2020 Christmas Faire, Parish Life also contributed funds for the May 16<sup>th</sup> **Spring Outdoor Faire** that wrapped up our 2020-21 educational year.

In June we hosted one parking lot **Movie Night** – Shrek – but had to cancel two other subsequent ones due to Covid concerns.

The monthly informal **Bingo Nights** started up again in July at Outtakes Bar & Grill in New Hope, as well as a couple more **Purse Bingo** events held at church in July and November.

After cancelling our 2020 baseball games, we were able to use our previous deposit to attend a **Saints** game on September 9<sup>th</sup>. We still have a deposit from 2020 with the cancelled **MN Twins** game, so hopefully that can be used in 2022.

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, the 2021-22 church year was kicked off with our annual event typically known as ‘Rally Day’ that was re-named **Homecoming Day** in hopes of welcoming back more members we missed over the summer. Unfortunately, our annual rollerskating days are over with the close of the Rollergarden in St. Louis Park, but a fun event was held at church instead. Human Foosball was played in the parking lot and Parish Life contributed funds toward the lunch served on the patio (hot dogs, drinks and ice cream). Afterward, a small parade was held where the various committees decorated wagons and other wheeled vehicles and threw candy, etc. Parish Life contributed the highly coveted trophy that was awarded to the “best” wagon.

**TRUNK OR TREAT** – 10/29/21 People opened their trunks to pass out treats. 150 goodie bags were distributed to kids (prefilled with some treats and also church information). Total outside event.

After a 1-year hiatus, we were able to go back to our in-person family **Holiday Craft** event on Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. 5-6 different crafts were available to a wide-variety of skill levels and were enjoyed by all. Holiday music and treats were served.

It is our hope that for 2021, we can slowly return to planning more events that will allow us to renew our relationships with our fellow church members and give us some new experiences in the meantime. Again, if you are interested in planning fun events for all ages, please speak with one of our members. All are welcome!

Respectfully Submitted By: Marisa Lerum (Council Liaison)

## **2021 Ministry Team Report**

**Ministry Team:** Personnel

**Council Liaison:** Becky Nichols

**Ministry Team Members:** Becky Nichols, Lori Cowman, Pastor Jason

**Purpose/State of Mission:** The purpose of the Personnel Ministry Team at Holy Nativity is to ensure that all staffing needs are met, and adequate compensation and benefits are provided to staff. In addition, staff performance is reviewed and measured. The performance and efficiency of staff contributes to a high level of worship experiences and church programs filtering out to community programs and congregational involvement.

**Here are the 2021 offerings/highlights/accomplishments:**

- Similar to 2020, we continued to have some challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we were able to begin some in person activities again.
- Our staff throughout 2021 remained largely the same.
- Added new to a review process, the staff began setting goals for themselves while looking forward to the next year.

Thank you to all our staff! You have adapted quickly to make necessary adjustments with safety measures in mind to keep church events going throughout the year.

Respectfully Submitted by Becky Nichols

## 2021 Property Team Report

**Ministry Team - Property**

**Council Liaison** – Joe Gartner

**Ministry Team Members** – Joe Gartner, Mark Chamberlain, LuVerne Erickson, Kirby Miller and Tom Wiblishauser

**Purpose/Statement of Mission** - (B1.01.04) This ministry shall coordinate the purchase, maintenance, replacement, and security of all congregational property and equipment. This ministry shall also solicit input from the congregation, from the Ministries, and the staff, as to needed facility/programmatic corrections and additions. This team will also ensure that a maintenance log is maintained on church property and equipment. Information received shall be distilled by this ministry, and preliminary directions shall be presented to the Congregation Council.

### 2021 Major Activities and Accomplishments:

First, I want to thank the committee members (listed above) and other congregation volunteers for the work completed this year. A big “THANK YOU!” to Mark Chamberlain for all the work he did in coordinating and getting the work done in 2020. 2021 was a little quieter on construction work. Many Thanks to all those that helped out with taking care of our property and keeping the lawn mowed!

*The following projects were completed:*

- Spring and Fall cleanups - World of Life helped
- Sprinkler system repair and layout review
- Water pipe burst and repair/cleanup by Shed/Garage
- Speaker upgrade
- Fire safety inspection completed
- An AC unit was replaced.
- Toilets replaced in the Child Care Center bathrooms.
- Misc repairs and upkeep performed by Tom

Future work:

- Bathroom upgrades. Will be looking for members to help with labor.
- Potential simplified sound system.

*Respectfully submitted by Joe Gartner, Jan 2022.*

## 2021 STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

### Stewardship Ministry Team Members

Jeremy Schmitz, Council Liaison      Pastor Jason Wahlstrom  
Beth Benedict      Janet Kubly      Nancy Van Heel

### Purpose/ Mission Statement

The Holy Nativity Stewardship Ministry Team is responsible for conducting the annual stewardship emphasis and promoting stewardship within the congregation.

### Stewardship Focus for 2021: Caring, Connected, Committed,

2021 has offered reminders of pre-pandemic church life including in person worship and activities. Although Covid variants remain Holy Nativity staff and leaders continue to create new and effective ways to offer weekly worship and many other creative opportunities for our members and the surrounding community. During this trying time, ministry continues to be accomplished and strengthened in new and interesting ways (remember Human Foosball?).

Throughout the very significant challenges that occurred during 2021, Holy Nativity members respond by strongly supporting our mission. The Stewardship Ministry Team thanks members for their generous continued financial support. As we approach the upcoming year with many continued unknowns, our membership is respectfully requested to faithfully contribute their current offering and consider an increase if possible.

A Stewardship Appeal letter with an enclosed Intent for Giving form was sent to each congregational member. Members were asked to complete the form and return it to the church office. Also, an Intent for Giving online form was created. **This year's response card included the ability for members to request that offering envelopes be discontinued if not being used, beginning in June 2022.**

**Additionally, our team would like to note our appreciation for Lisa Baker's creativity, providing pictures and formatting our bulletin inserts and brochure allowing it to be prepared in house. The theme, Caring, Connected, Committed, represents our continued mission. Many thanks to her for her creative and thoughtful abilities.**

In this New Year, we will not stop the work of providing creative ministries and programs to strengthen our mission as we continue to share God's love.

We remain Caring, Connected and Committed.

Jeremy Schmitz

# ***2021 WAM Ministry Team Report***

## ***Ministry Team*** – Worship, Arts & Music (WAM) Ministry

**WAM Chair** – Iver Hubert

**Team Members** – Lisa Baker, Greg Eklund, Cresta Hubert, Karen Levenson, Nora Levenson/*AGQ*

**Council Liaison** – Jon Peterson

**Purpose/Statement of Mission** – The **Worship, Arts & Music (WAM) Ministry Team** plans and coordinates areas such as music programming, worship materials and elements, visual art and thematic decorations and other artistic endeavors—all to enrich the worship experience at Holy Nativity.

## ***2021 Offerings/Highlights/Accomplishments***

**Holy Nativity and Children's Choirs** – All large group voice ensemble rehearsals were halted March of 2020, resuming September of 2021. The Nativity Choir reformed, following strict Covid guidelines that included mandatory vaccination. The Nativity Choir and Ensemble has continued to perform through Christmas, 2021. Children's Choir did not resume due to concerns that most or all of the children in the choir could not be vaccinated.

**Bell Choir** – Bell choir did not resume in 2021 due to lack of sufficient interest.

**Organ** – Preliminary research and work began late in 2020 to determine the feasibility of continued repair and service to our current organ, or if purchasing a new (used) organ is a better option.

**Online Services** – Courtesy of Mark Chamberlain and the Stream Team, newly formed in 2020, Church Services are available for viewing via Facebook and YouTube. Please contact the Church Office for details on how to access these services.

## ***Ministry Team*** – Altar Guild

**Altar Guild Quartermaster** – Nora Levenson

**Guilders** –Jan Birkholz, Kristen Daniels, Dorothy Erickson, Mary Lazerine, Karen Levenson, Deb Peterson, Maxine Peterson, and Ann Wahlström *Go Guilders Go*.

**AG Auxiliary** – Marilyn Rausch, Coordinator, Baptismal shawls; Deb Campion facilitator, Baptismal cards; Nancy Nagle, Coordinator, floral arrangements by request; Greg Eklund, supplier, Communion bread and gluten-free wafers; and Iver and Cresta Hubert, Covid AG assistance

**Purpose** – Altar Guild (AG) is responsible for supporting the Worship Team members by assembling the Eucharist and elements for Communion and Baptisms, decorating the Sanctuary for the high holiday seasons and maintaining the Worship Area of the Sanctuary.

**The Guild and Covid** – As services moved back into the Sanctuary and the congregation began returning slowly, the Altar Guild Procedures were modified. Communion changed from serving of wine and unleavened bread to pre-packaged celebration packs, which will continue in use while Covid variants continue to surge over Winter 2021. Steps will be taken in the near future to transfer the celebration packs fully under the arm of Altar Guild. Nora Levenson continued minimal weekly and monthly AG duties with the assistance of Karen Levenson, the Pastors, and Office Staff for acquiring and distributing the celebration packs.

**Services** – Baptisms went on as in pre-Covid, as did Funerals, with strict minimum attendance caps, required masking, and social distancing requirements. All Saints Sunday 2021 resumed as in previous years with congregational lighting of memorial candles. Christmas Eve Services for 2021 will include candlelight service candles.

WAM would like to thank everyone who assisted with these  
and all WAM and AG events, past, present and future!

*Respectfully submitted, WAM*

## 2021 Youth Ministry Team Report

### Ministry Team

- Youth

### Council Liaison

- TBD

### Ministry Team Members

- Wendy Grimes (Staff)
- Pastor Ashley (Staff)
- Chris Daniels
- Kelly Duclos

### Purpose/Statement of Mission:

- The Youth Ministry Team seeks to foster Christian Community through building relationships with young people that strengthen their commitment to the church and growth in faith in Jesus Christ.

### 2021 Offerings/Highlights/Accomplishments:

- Fundraisers
- Butterbraids
- Online silent auction
- Flamingo flocking
- Trips
- Boundary Waters
- Camp Wapo

### Events

- Forums
- via zoom January – May (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, monthly)
- in person September – December (weekly)
- Summer lunch meet-ups
- Bonfires
- Valleyfair
- Tough Stuff Retreat
- Shopping for PRISM tree
- Christmas Party

Respectfully submitted by Wendy Grimes



**Lake Wapogasset**  
LUTHERAN BIBLE CAMP, INC.



**Camp Wapo**



**Ox Lake**



**Wilderness  
Canoe Base**

715.268.8434  
lakewapo.org

## Congregational Report 2021

**Thank you for being a Partner Congregation!** We've nearly made it through another pandemic year! I remain grateful and inspired by the work and support of so many people who've continued to rally around this ministry in order that others should experience fellowship in community and come to know Jesus in these beautiful outdoor spaces. We couldn't have made it without the help from donors, prayer warriors, government pandemic programs, retreat guests, day visitors, campers, lively young adult summer staff, our local business banking and CPA offices, our Polk and Cook County health departments, congregations, and you! Special thanks goes out to our staff who exhibit flexibility and creativity as we continue to adapt to the changing Covid landscape.

2021 was challenging, but filled with bright spots. I expect much of the same for 2022 – exciting ministry opportunities, uncertainties about our participant numbers, continued health and safety Covid protocols, challenging budget needs, dynamic initiatives, challenging seasonal staff hiring environment, and more. We are poised to welcome these challenges and opportunities with grace, wisdom, humility and joy! We have good work to do.

**Summer 2021** We were so grateful to bring back summer camp at all three of our sites with strong Covid protocols in place. Due to the nature of the way groups move in and out, Wilderness was able to run canoe trips at their normal level. Wapo and Ox Lake reduced camper capacity to about 40-44% and thankfully an unusually dry summer allowed us to do all normal camp activities outside – including meals. Our summer staff was outstanding! Their incredible level of energy and ability to be flexible gave kids a camp experience that felt “normal”. Camp was much needed after a year into the pandemic and we expect this feeling to continue into 2022.

**Retreats and Events in 2021** Keeping strong Covid protocols in place we were able to host retreat groups at Wapo and Wilderness this fall and into the winter months. Rigorous cleaning and disinfecting protocols continue at all sites as well as masking in public areas. Special events continued with an adapted approach for the Memorial Day Breakfast and Advent on the Go but we were able to run a full Boat-in Worship season and Wapo golf tournament.

**New Faces** We welcomed Liz Bowman on Oct 18, 2021 as our Director of Food Services at Wapo and Eric Klein on Nov 1, 2021. Eric joins the program team with responsibilities for Wapo Seeds, Boat-In, Family Camp, and programmed retreats.

**Wilderness Give to the Max** Wilderness Canoe Base received a \$40,000 gift match for the GiveMN Give to the Max day. On November 18<sup>th</sup>, friends of WCB met that match, raising just over \$80,000 in one day for Wilderness Canoe Base.

**The Gather Campaign for a new Dining Hall and Hospitality Center** Our Site and Facilities crew will be finishing up Phase 1 of the Gather project this winter while development staff and campaign committee have begun feasibility interviews to determine the scope of Phase 2 to finish the project. We are incredibly grateful for the support we have received to be able to complete phase 1 with the funds we had already raised. Now as we live into this building and determine the needs for finishing the project, we are excited to make final plans in 2022 for what the completed building will look like. Please prayerfully consider how you might be able to financially support this important project as we continue to raise funds for Phase 2. See building progress at lakewapo.org.

**Strategic Plan Initiative.** This fall we began Strategic Initiative work with the Joshua Group. We launched a camp impact survey and started individual interviews with staff, Board, and friends of the organization. This strategic work will help us be aligned for meaningful and transformative ministry in an ever-changing ministry landscape.

**Our theme for 2022 is “Take Hold”** John 16:33 says, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” This summer we will explore what it means for roots of faith to take hold of the soil around us, as the soil takes hold of us. We know Jesus changed everything when he conquered the world for all. He gives us his peace even when the world gives us trouble, and helps us to see how God's love changed everything for all people. Join us as we Take Hold of this promise.

We look ahead with eager anticipation and a sure sense of hope.





## Bishop's Annual Report for 2021

God's grace, peace, and hope be with you through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I begin by sharing my profound gratitude to you – for your faithfulness, perseverance, and compassion revealed in countless ways during this global pandemic, now nearing the start of its third year.

As I reflect on the ministry of our synod in 2021, I am surprised to discover a number of “firsts” – something I did not expect in a pandemic year. In 2021:

- We received an unprecedented \$285,000 gift to provide educational debt relief to synod rostered leaders who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Currently, 12 percent of rostered leaders serving synod congregations are BIPOC, a sign of growth which will be strengthened by this gift.
- With our first ever million-dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment, we called Nick Tangen and Maya Bryant to lead our [Faith and Neighboring Practices](#) program, currently working with 13 congregations.
- In October, we set a goal to **raise \$500,000 in three months** to partner with our global companion synod in launching the first ever [Lutheran University in Nigeria](#). As of this writing, we have \$298,000 in gifts, \$56,000 in pledges, and are awaiting word about a significant gift from the ELCA World Hunger Program!
- We rejoiced with Alleluia! Lutheran Church in St. Michael as they dedicated their brand-new church building. We have celebrated many remodeling projects in our synod, this was the first completely new structure built in more than ten years.
- We welcomed Holy Cross Lutheran Church, originally a Missouri Synod congregation, into the synod.
- Led by VP Felecia Boone and Eric Howard, a task force has been working to apply a racial equity lens to the way our synod distributes funds and utilizes resources.
- We helped launch the [Center for Leadership and Neighborhood Engagement](#) (CLNE) led by Rev. Kelly Chatman. CLNE convened a virtual prayer tent for 77 straight days during the trial of Derek Chauvin. Now, they host “Come Together,” a virtual conversation on the third Thursday evening of each month.
- We held our first [Zoom Synod Assembly](#) with speakers Dr. Drew Hart and Michael Osterholm; offered our first online [Tool Kit](#) (to be expanded in 2022); and provided four online worship services to provide respite and build unity across the synod.
- Listening to the weariness of our rostered leaders, we cancelled Bishop's Theological Conference for the first time and organized the whole staff in a caring process for our leaders, “Tending Weary Souls.”
- We are preparing to host the [ELCA Youth Gathering](#) – the first ever held in Minneapolis, July 21-28, 2022.

Though a list of “firsts” can make for an interesting annual report, the ministries that continue day-in and day-out are the work that sustains. We are blessed with over 675 rostered leaders, 307 serving in calls and 370 retired or without call. In 2021, we supported 57 persons preparing to become deacons or pastors. We work hard so the church has the loving, faithful, and theologically well-formed ministers it needs.

Our monthly conference meetings and other synod gatherings continue to reveal a real hunger for leaders to stay connected and discern best practices for ministry in these times. We are honored and humbled by our calling to serve as convener of such holy conversations.

It is the generosity of congregations like yours that make the synod's work possible. Thank you! We seek to be careful stewards of every gift.

A year of firsts. More importantly, we gather around the unique, first-ever, Word made flesh – the Christmas miracle of God becoming human for us and our salvation. And even more, this Word made flesh abides with us – through all our firsts and lasts and everything in between.

With a grateful heart,  
Bishop Ann Svennungsen